



**Rosie Jean Adams**  
**Bywater American Bistro**  
**New Orleans, Louisiana**

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Interviewer: Rien Fertel  
Transcription: Diana Dombrowski  
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Project: COVID-19 Oral History Project

[00:00:00.00]

**Rien Fertel:** All right. This is Rien Fertel with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is October the 8th, 2020, a Thursday afternoon just after 1:30. We'll call this the very first of the Bywater American Bistro, COVID-19-centered oral history interviews. And I'm going to have you introduce yourself and full name and birthdate, please.

[00:00:32.28]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Okay. I'm Rosie Jean Adams, and my birthday is March 12, 1989.

[00:00:41.23]

**Rien Fertel:** Okay. I should ask, how are you? How are you feeling, how are you doing?

[00:00:49.06]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** I'm doing okay, but definitely have been struggling, as seems to be the case with everybody that I talk to, whether it's service industry or not.

[00:00:56.08]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. Would you say it's more or less or—we'll talk about the scope of the last six months, and you don't need to answer this—but does it feel like a harder week or a harder day than normal?

[00:01:15.21]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Today, it's interesting what happens right now because I'm the general manager here, so have a lot less staff right now, just simply because we don't need a whole lot of people here. So, sometimes, oddly enough when it is slower for us, it actually feels a little bit more stressful for me because we have even less people on. [Laughter] So, I have been wearing a lot of hats recently. But, yeah, just kind of a little disheartening with the storm and stuff, just feels like we can't catch a break. Every day that I wake up and I come here, I have no idea what's going to happen, I have no idea what's affecting people. We used to be able to somewhat play the game of predicting what's gonna happen. Oh, this weekend is a festival weekend, so people are gonna do this, this, and this. This weekend is a different type of weekend; we know it's gonna be slow for this reason. Now there doesn't seem to be quite as—you can't approach it rationally like that. You just kind of wake up and you don't know what's gonna happen. We could be slammed busy today or we could have nobody coming in. I don't know.

[00:02:17.28]

**Rien Fertel:** You're right, you're right. Thank you so much for sitting down. I mean, not only—you talked about the unpredictability of the past six months and coronavirus, but we're in the middle, it should be said for historical purposes, this is the sixth time this summer, I believe, this summer and fall that we've been under a hurricane watch or warning. Which we're all used to that, living and being in New Orleans, but it seems heavier this year because of the frequency of this storm and they do keep hitting other places. It looks like we've lucked out again; this is New Orleans, but not the state.

[00:02:54.09]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Right. I know it's always sad when we're happy that we're lucking out, but that always means that somebody else is getting screwed, so it's not a good feeling, really.

[00:03:07.29]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. So you mention you're the general manager here. Can you give the kind of short or longish story, however you want to put it, of what brought you here? Like how—I don't know where you're from, both in New Orleans and to Bywater American Bistro, or BAB, we might also call it BAB throughout this talk.

[00:03:24.18]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah, it's an easier thing to say.

[00:03:24.18]

**Rien Fertel:** So, how did you get here?

[00:03:24.18]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** So, I'm from here. I'm born and raised here, grew up Uptown, like in the Riverbend area. I went to college at American University in Washington, D.C., and while I was there, I actually started working at a restaurant there called Two Amy's. That was my first introduction to the service industry, and kind of fell in love with it. And started to learn a lot about wine and food and service and all of that. I was eighteen, I think, then. I then moved back here after college because I don't really like living anywhere other than New Orleans. I just kept working in the service industry, kept learning, and I became friends with a woman named Michelle Gueydan who was the first G.M. when we opened up BAB's. One of her demands that she had, being hired as the G.M., was that she could pick her assistant manager. So, when we opened, we had a G.M. and an assistant manager, and I was the assistant manager. I had never really managed before, so I was really shocked that I got that job.

[00:04:32.07]

**Rien Fertel:** And that was on the—first staff?

[00:04:35.23]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah, I was here before we opened, so I opened it with them. And then she ended up leaving to open a restaurant, I think in D.C., actually. They just asked me to be the G.M., and we kind of restructured a little bit. We had more of an operational office manager and a G.M., so that's how I came into the role. I got to take over the wine list, which is my favorite part of it.

[00:04:55.22]

**Rien Fertel:** And is that recent?

[00:04:55.22]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** No, that's when I became the G.M., that was kind of part of the deal. So, I had never been in charge of a wine list before, but had definitely been learning a lot about wine the whole time. My boyfriend's also a sommelier, so I kind of, through osmosis, picked up a lot from him.

[00:05:12.04]

**Rien Fertel:** Right.

[00:05:12.04]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** So, that's been fun. That's my baby, the wine menu.

[00:05:22.06]

**Rien Fertel:** One more question before we get to coronavirus with the theme of this talk, how do you describe this place, this restaurant? I think it's a good exercise. How do you describe this place?

[00:05:45.03]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** I feel like this place is kind of rooted in fine dining practices, but feels a lot more accessible and kind of comfortable and casual to people. It's become, I think when we first opened it, Larry and Nina's vision was to make something that it has become, more of a neighborhood place. There's really creative dishes that are new and exciting, but there's also some kind of staples and standbys and kind of comfort food for people. We live in a condo building, so we have a lot of built-in regulars. All of our regulars are people that live in the Bywater, pretty much. So, it's become much more of a kind of familial place. It's nice because you can see the whole restaurant, except for this little room. [Laughter] But you can kind of always know what's going on. I think that way, all of the servers and myself, all of the bartenders, we know all of our regulars' names. We know everything about them. We know their kids, we know their dogs. [Laughter] So, it's become a very kind of friendly, warm place, which I like a lot.

[00:06:47.25]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. So, let's bring it back to March and when you first realized that things would be different, that the pandemic was gonna affect you, your job, this business. Can you talk about that?

[00:07:09.07]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. Well, it was interesting because right—the day when we closed was our birthday was a restaurant for two years. And we were having a crawfish boil.

[00:07:18.17]

**Rien Fertel:** And what day was that?

[00:07:18.17]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** That was March 15th or 16th, I think.

[00:07:26.23]

**Rien Fertel:** Right. The 13th was a Friday, I know that, if that helps.

[00:07:29.24]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** It was the 15th, then, because it was a Sunday. We had planned—and this is before—we did kind of know about stuff, but it really all snuck up on us, I think, and New Orleans in general. All of a sudden there was this hard, "It's really happening!" And I fully didn't understand that when that was going on. That night, we got told that we had to have everybody out of the restaurant by nine, which I had no clue about. We had people just starting their meals and stuff, so we had to basically kick people out.

[00:08:00.17]

**Rien Fertel:** Sunday night.

[00:08:02.01]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah, Sunday night.

[00:08:00.12]

**Rien Fertel:** Oh, you were gonna have the party after?

[00:08:00.12]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** No, we had a crawfish boil on Sunday. It wasn't—we were aware that this wasn't some sort of familial, it was at individual tables we were making crawfish, so it's not like everybody was together. But yeah, once again, we just didn't really know what was going on at that moment. So that was kind of crazy. Then we shut down, and I wasn't back here until June. I came back in June.

[00:08:31.07]

**Rien Fertel:** Do you remember—because my memory is already so hazy—when you were asked or told that everyone has to be out of the restaurant, was that a city mandate?

[00:08:38.29]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** I believe it was a city mandate, and I believe that it came from the mayor. And I think Larry saw it on his phone or something. We just realized, "Oh, this is something that's really gonna happen." I just hadn't even entertained it at all, really, with the full shutdown. I knew that something was going on, but I just didn't think about it like that.

[00:08:56.17]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. What do you remember from maybe that first week? Did you come back?

Was there staff meetings, how did it work, communication?

[00:09:07.09]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** There were. Yeah, there was a little bit of stuff, like just manager meetings.

We didn't really have the whole staff coming back, because we obviously didn't want a lot of people gathering in the same place. But yeah, it was just kind of tying up loose ends and trying to figure out—because, at that point, we knew that we'd be closed for at least some chunk of time. Didn't know it was gonna be that long. But yeah, we just came back. Me and—I did inventory just to get prepared for whatever was gonna happen. That's all we did. Then, they also—I didn't come to this, but they had to get rid of a bunch of stuff in the refrigerator, so we did have the staff come pick stuff up for themselves. Just, "Hey, whatever we have!" Might as well give it to the people that work with us.

[00:09:54.22]

**Rien Fertel:** Right. Do you remember thinking to yourself—because I think we all do this during these moments where we don't know what's gonna happen next—but thinking to yourself, "Oh, it's only gonna be a day, a week, a month."

[00:10:04.14]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Oh, yeah. I definitely thought it was—I think, for some reason, I knew it would be at least a month, but I did not think it would be as long as it was. Even me coming back in June, that's not when the staff came back. We just had me and two sous chefs come back in June. We were doing some to go food, and then we started doing one table a night. I don't know if you remember that. Yeah, we did that for the month of June.

[00:10:32.24]

**Rien Fertel:** Can you talk about that, like more in depth? What role you played in that decision-making process, and what role you played in those early June takeout days and one table days?

[00:10:47.04]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. I don't know if I was really involved in the decision-making of that, but they told me about it. Honestly, I was thrilled, because I am not—I realized I am not good at quarantine life. I think some people really actually kind of thrived, not like we were happy it was going on, but for example, my boyfriend definitely. He has so many hobbies, he just loved it. He's like, "I don't have to work! I can just do all this stuff." I'm like, "I need to interact with people!" So, when they told me that they were doing the one table a night and I'd just come back on as the GM, but basically I'd be the only front of house person, because for one table. So, I was bartending and taking orders and

chatting and selling wine and bussing and dishwashing and everything. It was just me and Kevin, one of our sous chefs, and Chef Nina and Larry. We just all did everything. It was very strange, but it was kind of—it was really heartening and really emotional, actually, when we first did that, because people that were coming out for the one table a night, obviously they realized this was something really special. They were doing a prix fixe menu and it was beautiful. But they also mostly were people that were like, "We're so happy that you're doing this because this is only way that we feel safe going out. We're the one table." We had so many tears. Me crying, them crying. They were just so grateful that we did that. I thought it was cool to start off slowly like that.

[00:12:18.17]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. I'm glad you talked about that, that was going to be my next question, was how you felt. I think as far as that, how did you feel safety-wise? June was also a time—we're in mid-October and some people still haven't stepped foot in restaurants. How did it feel in June, when even the medical community, there was still a lot of debate about how this disease spreads and everything else?

[00:12:50.25]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Right. Right. I think I had some sense of safety. I don't know if I should say this, but I am ninety-nine percent positive that I had it before. I know that that doesn't mean anything necessarily, but I think that was just kind of in my head. My boyfriend completely lost his sense of smell and taste at one point, that would be a huge

coincidence if it wasn't that. We quarantined for a month, basically. So, I think I felt okay about that. Also, with the one table, it was easy to—it's like first of all, those people that were coming in were not gonna be the types of people that would be refusing to wear a mask or doing anything disrespectful because they realize this is a really special thing, and it's actually just me and them talking. So, I would say more so than any other time, that's when people kept putting their masks back on when I'd come over, so there was a lot of that. I didn't really feel unsafe. I did feel like I had a short fuse and still kind of do have a short fuse with a lot of things that I've had to deal with as a manager of a restaurant. You just feel—I'm so grateful to work here and I'm happy that I am, but sometimes after you're wearing a mask for ten hours and somebody does something that would just be slightly annoying before, it's actually really annoying now.

[00:14:12.25]

**Rien Fertel:** Right. Right. I'm guessing people trying to come through the doors without a mask, despite the signs.

[00:14:21.04]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Right. We have been really lucky here, and I think that this is a testament to the culture that we've kind of created in this restaurant, because we have so many regulars and people that we personally know. That we haven't had to deal with a lot of that. It has happened. But overwhelmingly, if somebody's walking in without a mask and I tell them to, they're like, "Oh, my god, I'm so sorry, I just forgot!" Which is completely

understandable. But I've talked to almost all my friends here are in the service industry, too, and I've talked to some of them at other restaurants, and compared to what they're dealing with, I feel incredibly lucky that our guests have been overwhelmingly really respectful, which is good.

[00:15:01.09]

**Rien Fertel:** Good, good. Between March and when you reopened, to some extent, in June, you said you didn't really love that quarantine life. What did you do financially? What sort of options? Did you explore any of those options? Because of your managerial status, were you kept on staff here? How did that work, if you want to talk about that?

[00:15:26.24]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. I just got unemployment during that time. They did let me keep my—I think I was paying half of my health insurance that I'm normally given here. So, yeah. Unemployment was a thing. And that was fine.

[00:15:43.00]

**Rien Fertel:** It was easy?

[00:15:45.01]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Sometimes, it was frustrating. But it did work for me the whole time. I know that there's been some terrible stories about it, never working for people and not

getting back tracked or whatever, but yeah, I got it. We weren't doing anything, so we weren't spending any money. "Actually, my bank account's looking pretty good!" Because we're not going out." Just a lot of cooking at home and just grocery store, the only outing that we had.

[00:16:13.21]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. So, can you take me through the second half of coronavirus? So, from June to the reopening to reservations and people coming in the door to where you are now.

[00:16:31.08]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. So, I would say July 1st is when we reopened, like really reopened for regular service, as regular as we can be at out fifty percent capacity and tables being six feet apart. So, we moved a bunch of tables out of here. We ended up getting outdoor furniture as well, because a lot of people have been calling us and saying that they don't feel comfortable sitting inside at all. So, we did that. We were lucky enough—I was really grateful for this, because we had a really small staff pre-COVID. A lot of people that have been with us for quite a long time, like including some people that opened the restaurant with us. It was kind of an obvious choice of who to bring back and what was fair, so I just brought back only three servers at first, like total. One of them opened the restaurant with us, and the other two were the next people that have worked for the longest, and also the most full-time. So, just as a boss in general, that was really nice, because I didn't feel like I was really screwing anyone over. I think everybody on our

staff understood that they would be the three people that were invited back. Kind of funny because now, I don't even have to send out a schedule, because they're just on the whole week. We're closed Mondays and Tuesdays, so everybody, we all just work Wednesday thru Sunday. The reservations were pretty impressively good, right at the beginning, especially, for what we can do. It's funny, because with that amount of staff—we have no support staff right now—at first, I was actually bartending and hosting, as well, so we didn't have that. And so all of a sudden, fifty covers would feel crazy, when we're used to doing almost two hundred or something. So that was interesting. I did feel very—and we all did—our bodies and minds just weren't used to it after that amount of a hiatus and everybody just—you'd be exhausted after the shifts.

[00:18:33.15]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah, in what ways? Like you would physically be exhausted, mentally?

[00:18:41.02]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Physically exhausted, for sure, because you're just not used to running around. I mean, I guess some people did their exercising during quarantine probably more than I did, but yeah, just not used to the running around. Especially, I wasn't used to bartending, so just the motions that you make bartending. But definitely emotionally, I think we all just felt kind of crazy at the end of every shift. Because like I said, our guests have been really great, but even that's kind of an emotionally taxing thing, to

keep feeling upset with guests—like happy with guests. There's just so much going on and I've only spoken to one person for the past four months, in-person. So, that's weird.

[00:19:22.09]

**Rien Fertel:** Right, yeah. You mention that several people have been here since opening day, so that's over two years now, which is very rare.

[00:19:33.11]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yes, yeah.

[00:19:36.20]

**Rien Fertel:** It's rare in the service industry. It's rare in New Orleans.

[00:19:39.07]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Um-hmm.

[00:19:40.26]

**Rien Fertel:** What sort of dynamic do you have here—and especially during those three months that you were not here, and maybe the three months since June, when you had been working together—has it brought you closer together, has it pulled you apart? How did you stay in touch, did you stay in touch? I grew up in restaurants, and restaurants are often thought of as families, right? Everyone's paid and can be fired and thrown out of

the family, but it's—and it's a romantic view, for sure—but it's also often thought of as a family. Did that play in at all? Did it bring you closer?

[00:20:27.18]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. I would say that. In the two and a half plus years that we've been open now, we've had some issues. Obviously, that happens. But with those people staying on that I opened the place with, we've all been very close. The servers have been very close. A lot of them live right around here; they're all each other's neighbors, help each other out. But this definitely did bring the small staff that we have definitely closer together. It's only the three servers—so for example right now—and they're all best friends. They hang out all the time. But if I make a cut, if I'm like, "Oh, we don't need three people tonight," I no longer—it's not even up to me as a manager, because they just do it with themselves. "Oh, you know, I really know that **Steven's** moving today," or, "Molly needs to get her car fixed," so she can just have the cut. There's been a lot of that, just kind of mutual helping each other out and being very understanding. Everyone has something going on right now.

[00:21:36.13]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:21:33.23]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** But yeah, it definitely has brought us closer. I will say, with the back of house, too, that's always been kind of a nice thing here. I think it's really because of the open kitchen, too. It's when we're all doing our side work and stuff, everybody's doing it together. We, as the front of house, are constantly in the kitchen doing things. That's been very nice for this restaurant as well.

[00:21:59.02]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. And thinking back over the past six months, is there anything you wish you would've handled differently, or the restaurant would've handled differently?

[00:22:07.26]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Umm.

[00:22:11.04]

**Rien Fertel:** We often think about critiquing the city and the government. We can do that, too.

[00:22:12.26]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Right.

[00:22:14.05]

**Rien Fertel:** And I think that would be worthwhile, but maybe we'll start small first.

[00:22:18.26]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. I think—this might not be a direct answer to that, but I definitely had my doubts about doing that one table a night thing, because I just didn't know how lucrative that really is for the restaurant and what that would do, but I actually think that it gave people a feeling, even just people that weren't here but heard about it, a feeling that we weren't just rushing back into something and not thinking about all the protocols that we needed to put in place. It did take us a while to kind of figure all of that out, and I'm really glad that we did it that slowly, now. Looking back at it, I was like, "I don't know—" But I actually think that it was a really good idea. And we've had many people tell us that. We've had so many reviews recently, personally and on OpenTable and stuff, saying that they feel very safe here. So, I'm happy about that. I think that we've handled it really well. We take temperatures of all the employees when they come in, every single day. We have had—humans get sick, it's not necessarily COVID—but we have had a few scares, myself included. I felt really sick one day. And we all just immediately go get tested.

[00:23:29.18]

**Rien Fertel:** Is that protocol?

[00:23:30.22]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. We don't come back until you have a physical doctor's note that says you are negative for COVID.

[00:23:36.23]

**Rien Fertel:** Wow.

[00:23:37.29]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. That's been good, too. It sucks to have the scares, but it's just kind of like—that's what you have to do right now. As a manager, and as owners for Larry and Nina, we just all have to roll with the punches. If somebody feels sick, it's no longer, "You have to stay." Not that we would make someone stay at work if they were sick, but usually in the service industry, if you're just feeling a little, "Oh, I don't really feel that great," you would never think anything of it. But now, it's, "No, no, no. You have any sort of symptom, you leave." [Phone rings] Sorry.

[00:24:03.05]

**Rien Fertel:** Just pause.

[Break in recording.]

[00:24:10.16]

**Rien Fertel:** Okay. There might be dozens of things to say about the local, state, and federal government's response. In your mind, over those past six months or six-plus months now, what has gone really well? And for you, personally, and the business, and what do you think has been kind of the most devastating or didn't help?

[00:24:42.04]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Well, for the restaurant, I would say that—I don't know—I understand the rules that are put in place, so I can't really complain about them, but definitely the hardest thing for us as a small restaurant has been the fact that we can't seat people at the bar, because we don't actually have anywhere that people can wait. Especially when it was really hot outside, we just had people standing outside, waiting, which is—people, like I said, have been understanding, but they can only be understanding for so long. And also what's interesting right now, because I've been hosting, too, people don't have anywhere to go after they're done with their meal. So, we can't turn the tables. The next wave of people that come are almost inevitably gonna be waiting. At 7 p.m., they'll probably get sat at 7:30 because people don't want to leave. It's not like they can go to a bar or a show or a movie, whatever. So, they just hang out here, which is difficult, because we're so happy to have them here and so happy that they're having a great time, but at the same time, we need to be able to turn them, as a restaurant, to make money. So, that's been difficult, for sure. Yeah, I don't remember what else I was gonna say about that.

[00:26:06.00]

**Rien Fertel:** No, that's helpful. Well, and what do you think—has something worked really well?

[00:26:14.04]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** The outdoor tables, us being kind of forced to have outdoor tables, is actually great. We're gonna hold on to that even if and when this whole thing's over. We've just realized that it's actually really pleasant to have the outdoor tables. It is a little bit difficult for us because it's a weirdly far distance away with that ramp, but that actually has been cool, and something that we've kind of realized that we can do. And it expands—it already was a small restaurant, so if we didn't have the outside tables and we didn't have the bar, that would really be hard. So, I'm very glad that that came into play. That was something that we were just guided to do through the demands of the guests. So, that was good.

[00:26:57.21]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. I think, just one more question, and it's not even really a Coronavirus question. Maybe it is. But this restaurant, like I think a lot of restaurants, has a strong social media presence.

[00:27:17.12]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah, um-hmm.

[00:27:19.13]

**Rien Fertel:** And it has a strong, I think, relationship with its fans, right? The people who eat here often aren't just regulars. People who love this place and love Nina, who's a well-known—we'll call her a celebrity chef—and her business and life partner, Larry, is well-known. He is a social media presence. He is a bit of a trickster in the community, right?

[00:27:45.26]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. He's a hoot. [Laughter]

[00:27:50.01]

**Rien Fertel:** He's a hoot. They're lovable. But you're also a well-known face of this place, I would say. I would argue that people know you from social media and people take pictures of you, and you are this beloved presence here. You're not only the first face—usually standing next to Larry, I think, for the last two-plus years—the first face that they see when they walk in the door, but people, I think, get a sense of who you are or at least learn your name, maybe before they've even have eaten here.

[00:28:29.11]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Maybe, yeah.

[00:28:31.20]

**Rien Fertel:** And I'm not necessarily sure that that's of your own doing. Larry, not to put him down, Instagrams a lot.

[00:28:39.01]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yes, he does. [Laughter]

[00:28:42.22]

**Rien Fertel:** And tweets. That's part of his persona. Do you think about that? How do you feel about that, being—I would say, very closely tied to this restaurant and kind of known as a beloved personality associated with this place?

[00:29:00.11]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. I feel very proud of that. Especially just because I opened this place with them, I really am extremely attached to this restaurant, and I feel very much like it's my baby. It's not my restaurant, but I have been in here since we've started, and I've seen it grow and everything that's happened. I'm very close with our staff and with Larry and Nina. Yeah, it was something that I truly missed during quarantine. It was nice to obviously not be stressed out about things. There's parts of the job that obviously aren't as fun, but the sense of belonging and being attached to a place that people are also attached to is definitely something that I enjoy. It's probably my favorite part of the job. I am definitely not as much of a social media presence as Larry is. He actually, when I first started, he basically forced me to get on Instagram. He always makes fun of me. I never post on it. I did it for a while, and then I was like, "This just isn't me." [Laughter]

But I don't mind him posting pictures of me. Yeah, I'm not as much of that sort, but I'm happy to be included in it.

[00:30:11.14]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. Well, I want to thank you for sitting down and talking. Did we leave anything out? Hopefully we can sit down in six months to a year and talk about some of the longer scope of how it worked and how it felt. Are we missing anything?

[00:30:27.19]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** I don't think so. I think that maybe one thing—we kinda touched on it—but I feel like I'm feeling a bit more positive right now than I was. But it was, I will say, very hard to come back to work and be around people. Even though, comparatively to other places, it's been great, there is this sense of everybody's going through something right now. It's just completely compounded by the Coronavirus and the storms and the scares and everything. I just feel like everyone's in a really fragile state, and that's staff and guests and delivery drivers and everybody else that I interact with it. It is weird to go back to interacting with, probably, a hundred people a day, not that we have a hundred guests coming in, but including the staff and delivery drivers and wine reps and all of that. And you just hear everybody's story and just their mood and where they're at. It is a little overwhelming when you get home at the end of the day.

[00:31:31.15]

**Rien Fertel:** How do you deal? How do you cope?

[00:31:35.22]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Sometimes, not so well. [Laughter] My boyfriend, this whole time—he actually is the bar manager at Compère Lapin, which hasn't opened yet, so he's been in quarantine this whole time. That has helped me a lot, because when I come home, he basically already cooked for us, the house is clean. If we were both back into work immediately, I think that it would just be really hard. But now I can actually come home and kind of decompress and not be worried about those other kind of regular life things that one has to do. Yeah, I definitely have had a lot of breakdowns. [Laughter]

[00:32:18.16]

**Rien Fertel:** Well, I think, can I ask one more question? Do you have time for?

[00:32:21.29]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah.

[00:32:23.21]

**Rien Fertel:** I want to ask this because you're from New Orleans, and I'm guessing among the staff you're probably one of the very few people who have lived most of your life here.

[00:32:31.08]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah, I think I'm the only one right now.

[00:32:35.09]

**Rien Fertel:** You would have been living here in 2005, I'm guessing?

[00:32:39.28]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yes.

[00:32:38.00]

**Rien Fertel:** So I lived here in 2005, so we are fellow Katrina veterans. A lot of people—and I'm not sure I agreed with them at the time, but—were comparing, certainly within the restaurant industry, Coronavirus and Katrina, the effects on the business.

[00:32:54.10]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah, um-hmm.

[00:32:56.28]

**Rien Fertel:** Did you think about that? Did you consider that? How do you feel about that, for a city and for a restaurant industry in the city that's so closely related to that event, fifteen years ago? We just celebrated the fifteenth anniversary. I don't know if we'll ever be able to separate those two things. Did you think about that, did it make sense to you?

[00:33:26.13]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. I definitely thought about that a lot. My whole thing that it felt like I was equating the two situations as much, but I kept being completely—my mind kept getting blown. I held all this Katrina trauma and all this shit with me for a long time, and it just kept blowing my mind that, "Oh, my god, it's the entire world." It's not just one region. That's what kept blowing my mind, because I so attached to this whole disaster, scary, apocalyptic, whatever's going on, to being one place that then other people can help and people can evacuate from and that type of situation. That's not what was going on. It was something that I couldn't really grapple with, just mentally. But obviously, I see similarities in what everyone is having to do, but it just seems a lot bigger than that. Not as sharply—but I guess it is as sharply impactful—but different scenarios but COVID, we just don't know what's gonna happen.

[00:34:33.28]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah, I think you're right. It's hard to dream up what six-plus months ago, what was gonna happen, and then what's gonna happen next.

[00:34:47.12]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Right. There's oftentimes that I definitely feel—just like, with Katrina, I was very young, but I felt very hopeful. It was awful, but then there was this rebuilding and kind of joy of coming back and seeing things get better and seeing people come back and all of that. With COVID, and I don't know if it's just because I'm older and not as optimistic anymore, but I don't know. This could go on, this or something like this could be going on for a really long time.

[00:35:23.24]

**Rien Fertel:** Yeah. Well, thank you again for sitting down and talking.

[00:35:29.19]

**Rosie Jean Adams:** Yeah. Thank you.

*[End of interview]*





